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FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0910  
INFO RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 4381  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 9464  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 2360  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 9444  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 000835

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/29/2016  
TAGS: [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [CASC](#) [KPAO](#) [EAID](#) [NP](#)  
SUBJECT: DID MAOISTS ATTACK RADIO STATION BECAUSE OF U.S.  
TIES?

REF: A. NEPAL UPDATE MARCH 23 2006

[1](#)B. 05 KATHMANDU 1545  
[1](#)C. KATHMANDU 321

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) Members of a visiting international media mission told Emboff that Maoists had told them a Maoist attack on a radio station in May 2005 was due to its American connection and that the Maoists had threatened future harm to any media with U.S. ties. Further investigation by the Embassy, however, revealed this assertion may be intended to cover up a local disagreement between the Maoists and an NGO running the station. END SUMMARY.

MAOISTS TARGET MEDIA WITH AMERICAN "IMPERIAL" TIES

[1](#)2. (C) On March 24, two members of an international media mission on a follow-up visit to Nepal to assess media freedom (REF A, B) briefed Emboff on their March 23 meeting with Maoist commanders in Palpa, a hilly district in western Nepal (REF C). The mission member who had been sitting across from the Maoists at the March 23 meeting told Emboff that the Maoist commander insisted a May 19, 2005 attack on Ghoda Ghodi FM in the far western district of Kailali (some 700 km west of Kathmandu) was because of its U.S. connection. In the attack, the Maoists forcibly entered the station and took transmission equipment worth an estimated Rs 1 million (USD 14,000). (Note: A member of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) told Emboff that security forces later seized the rest of the equipment at the station, but no other source mentioned or could confirm this. END NOTE.) The Maoist leader, whom the media mission member said was fourth in command of the Maoists' military wing, said the NGO running the station, Backward Society Education (BASE), was receiving money from the United States and was targeted because of this connection. (Note: Through its conflict mitigation program, USAID funds an NGO called World Education, which has partnered with BASE to implement USAID-funded programs. END NOTE.) The Maoists said that they could not tolerate any media with "imperialist" connections. The Maoists then insisted this anti-American stance was official policy and that the insurgents would continue to attack media with U.S. ties. The media mission

took the Maoists at their word and wanted to convey directly to Emboff the seriousness of this threat.

BUT PERSONAL CONFLICT MIGHT ALSO BE CAUSE

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¶3. (C) Several media contacts, however, asserted that the Maoist raid on Ghoda Ghodi FM may have been due to personal conflict between the Maoists in Kailali and BASE -- and had no American connection, as alleged by the Maoists. BASE works with members of the Kamiya community, who are bonded laborers. The station transmitted about 10 hours per day, half in the local Tharu language and half in Nepali, on social issues as well as local news and entertainment. BASE intended to turn the radio station over to the local community after getting it up and running. According to a former journalist now working with the National Democratic Institute (NDI), some Maoists in the area had previously been associated with BASE. Unknown personal conflict between these Maoists and the NGO caused the raid, he commented. The NDI representative speculated this could be partly because BASE members are from the Tharu ethnic community while many of the Maoists are from the Brahmin/Chhetri castes. He surmised that the Maoists did not like BASE's work and also possibly had tried threatening BASE into broadcasting Maoist propaganda. An FNJ contact said he thought the Maoists had wanted BASE to turn the radio station over to the local community more quickly than was being done, but a source in the FM radio industry said BASE's chairman told him the organization was in the last stage of doing so when the raid occurred. NDI believed that the personal animosity between BASE and the local Maoists was the real reason behind the raid and that it had no anti-American connection.

¶4. (C) Since the raid, the BASE-supported station has acquired new equipment and is again broadcasting, though with fewer hours of programming. BASE still has not turned the station over to the local community. Media contacts knew of no other Maoist threats or problems with the radio station or NGO.

COMMENT

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¶5. (C) No matter the actual reasons behind the May 2005 attack, the Maoists' statement to the visiting international media mission that they had targeted Ghoda Ghodi because of U.S. connections and that their policy was to target media if they work with Americans is worrisome. It follows the recent trend of an increase in statements about the United States and the Maoists' "anti-imperialist" stance. Post is considering working more closely with media, especially on English Language Teaching via radio. In that context, the Mission will push the Maoists for greater clarity on their intentions with respect to U.S. interests.  
MORIARTY